

# montana public health association



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EXHIBIT 3  
DATE 2-21-07  
HB HB 612

February 21, 2006

Representative Ron Stoker  
Chair, Human Resources  
Montana State Legislature  
Helena, MT 59620

Dear Chairman Stoker and Committee Members:

The Montana Public Health Association would like to voice its support for HB 612, An Act Establishing the Healthy Youth Program. We thank the House Human Services Committee for considering the bill, and appreciate Representative Teresa Henry for sponsoring the legislation.

Abstinence only education to prevent unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted disease is not good fiscal or public health policy. Not all young people choose to be abstinent. If we deny these youth critical information about contraception and prevention in the era of AIDs we are placing their health and lives in jeopardy.

In Minnesota an analysis shows that it's five-year, 5 million dollar initiative to teach teenagers to remain virgins until their wedding night failed to reduce sexual activity.

The reality is that young people, who watch highly sexualized images on TV and movies, need and deserve honest and accurate information about abstinence and contraception. This approach is supported by the American Medical Association, the American Nurses Association and the National Institute of Health along with 100 other medical and professional organizations. Information is not permission.

Instead of fear, denial and blame, we need to try rights, respect and responsibility.

Young people have a right to accurate and complete information. Undermining people's confidence in the effectiveness of contraceptives, including condoms, threatens their health and lives.

Young people deserve respect. Too often they are viewed solely as part of the problem when we should include them as part of the solution.

Finally, young people have an obligation to act responsibly, to make safe and sound decisions about their sexuality.

Young people and unmarried people of all ages are having sex. If we give young people the tools, more and more, they will make safe and responsible decisions. Now more than ever, young people need a strong abstinence and contraception message, with accurate information that will protect their health and saves their lives.

Please support HB 612.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lora Wier".

Lora Wier  
Montana Public Health Association